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SUBJECT: DCM Covers Cooperation, Disputes with Vietnam's MPS

REF: A. HANOI 1044

¶1. (SBU) Summary: DCM and Ministry of Public Security (MPS) Major General To Lam addressed a wide range of issues in their September 23 meeting. Lam noted excellent bilateral cooperation in counterterrorism and nonproliferation, and discussed MPS's requests for assistance. The DCM pressed for progress in resolving the imits on the Ho Chi Minh City consular district, protested the recent beating of an Amcit journalist by Vietnamese police, raised concerns over the GVN's handling of Catholic Church land protests, and pressed for prompt GVN accreditation of new Embassy Hanoi DATT. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) DCM met with Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security Major General To Lam on September 23. Lam was accompanied by Mr. Nguyen The Cong, Deputy Director of the Department of General Security, and Mr. Pham Hong Cuong, MPS Human Rights Desk Officer.

MPS Request for Legal, Laundering Assistance  
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¶3. (SBU) General Lam began by noting the excellent relations between MPS and the embassy, which help strengthen the overall U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship. The DCM welcomed the MPS's requests for assistance in amending their public security and criminal codes, anti-money laundering efforts and other areas. Lam said that as Vietnam becomes more globally connected, it must modernize its laws and law enforcement practices to international standards. He noted that Vietnam has had particularly good cooperation with the U.S. in the area of counter-terrorism. The U.S. and Vietnam have worked together to control arms smuggling and the spread of weapons of mass destruction and these are areas where the GVN hopes to deepen our bilateral cooperation, Lam said.

Consular District Issue: MPS Knows of No Problems  
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¶4. (SBU) Turning to the issue of the Ho Chi Minh consular district, DCM noted the GVN desire to announce the opening of a consulate in Houston during Prime Minister Dung's June visit to the U.S. but said the issue of the HCMC consular district had to be resolved first. She said that the HCMC consular district was uniquely restricted, and that while we respect the GVN's security concerns we want to have a consular district that makes sense so we can move forward with Vietnamese consulates in the U.S. and better encourage U.S. business and tourism in Vietnam. Lam noted that nine additional provinces had been added to the HCMC consular district and said that, in principle, there is no restriction on consular officers visiting other provinces as long as they make the proper requests in advance. Some provinces, however, may not desire or welcome visits by U.S. mission personnel.

¶5. (SBU) The DCM pointed out that this week we have two officers going to Danang, one from embassy Hanoi and one from ConGen HCMC. The one from Hanoi is being allowed to have meetings in Danang while

the officer from HCMC is being denied permission to attend the meetings. This is difficult to understand, the DCM said, particularly since Vietnamese diplomats in the U.S. face no similar restrictions and MPS Vice Minister Huong recently told Deputy Secretary Negroponte there were no such restrictions (reftel). Lam said this was the first he had heard of this problem and said he would look into it.

¶16. (SBU) Lam said that when U.S. diplomats visit political dissidents in their travels around the country, it raises the suspicions of local governments. These visits encourage the dissidents and harm bilateral relations as people ask how the U.S. can have good relations with Vietnam while continuing to meet with people who oppose its government. The DCM responded that U.S. diplomats around the world meet with people holding a wide variety of views to deepen our understanding of the countries in which we serve. We have very good relations with Vietnam, she said, and we believe the GVN understands that the U.S. is not encouraging the overthrow of Vietnam's government.

#### DCM Protests Beating of Journalist

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¶17. (SBU) The DCM expressed concern over the rough handling of an American AP journalist detained by police on September 19 as well as the escalation of the church land protests he had been reporting when detained. Lam said the journalist had been warned not to enter the area where the protests were taking place for security reasons but had entered anyway and been injured before being "rescued" by the police. The DCM said that account was completely incorrect; the journalist was filmed being taken away by the police and within the hour embassy officers saw the journalist bloodied at the police

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station. She pushed for an appropriate reply to our request for an investigation of the incident. In marked contrast to statements from the MFA spokesman the day before, Lam responded that MPS is taking the incident seriously and will look into it; if an investigation shows any wrongdoing by the police, it will be dealt with seriously.

#### Concerns Over Catholic Church Protests

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¶18. (SBU) The DCM said we also remain concerned regarding the government's response to ongoing Catholic Church land protests, particularly the government action at the Nha Chung property and the growing number of arrests of individuals who have participated in peaceful prayer vigils at Thai Ha parish. We have urged the Hanoi People's Committee to exercise restraint and to engage in a dialogue directly with Catholic leaders and believers in order to seek a mutually agreeable resolution to property disputes, the DCM said. Lam responded that MPS also wants to see a peaceful resolution of this issue. DCM noted the constructive role Vice Minister Huong has played in defusing past disputes, and urged similar action to address the current standoff.

#### Pushing on Pending Approval for DATT-Designate

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¶19. (SBU) The DCM raised the long-pending visa for DATT-designate Patrick Reardon, noting the Vietnamese embassy in Washington had told us the Ministry of Defense has accepted his accreditation and that the issue is now being reviewed by other ministries in the GVN. Lam responded that there may be "technical problems" with the accreditation and promised to look into it.

MICHALAK